

Marriage Guidance Booklets—No. 1

SEX IN MARRIAGE



Issued by

THE MARRIAGE GUIDANCE COUNCIL

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THE MARRIAGE GUIDANCE BOOKLETS

These Booklets are issued by the Marriage Guidance Council. They are written in simple language so that ordinary people can understand them. They are sold at prices which bring them within the reach of all.

Each Booklet is the joint production of the Committee of the Council. Their names are printed on the inside of the back cover. Thus the Booklets represent the combined efforts of a group of experts, and no pains are spared to make them clear and accurate.

This Booklet was first published under the title "How to Treat a Young Wife," and was intended particularly for men. It has now been revised to be equally suitable for both men and women.

Those who need guidance before marriage, or help about marriage difficulties, may write for advice to the Secretary of the Council. Such letters are treated as strictly confidential. A fee of 2/6 is charged, to those who can afford it, to cover the expenses of giving advice by post.

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SEX IN MARRIAGE

One of the writers responsible for this booklet recently received a letter from a Naval Chaplain saying that men frequently consult him about their wives. "These men complain that their wives are cold towards them, are continually irritated, or have even left them and won't live with them. . . . When questioned closely they all confess to have been, to a greater or lesser degree, inartistic, blundering, impetuous, forcing, etc., in their early attempts at sexual intercourse. *They state that the trouble began there.*"

That letter is the immediate cause of this booklet. It is written specially for men and women about to marry. But it is hoped that many already married may find it helpful, too. In either case, the couple should read it carefully, and talk over these matters frankly together.

Let us begin with a few general truths. Sexual intercourse is only part of married life and should never be allowed to take too large a place. A happy marriage is made up of many other and more important things, too—comradeship, mutual affection and trust, the sharing of common interests, care for home and children. But unless the act of intercourse, which is an essential part of normal marriage, is properly managed so as to bring mutual satisfaction, much else may be spoiled. And most couples need help so that they may know how

they may achieve mutual satisfaction and happiness.

The wife is capable of enjoying intercourse quite as much as the man. But if through ignorance and haste he makes mistakes, it does not bring her the proper fulfilment and pleasure ; and in consequence difficulties may arise. She may become irritable and unhappy, not knowing that what she needs is the sexual satisfaction she is missing. She may even say she is disinclined for intercourse altogether. When that kind of thing happens, it is often because her first experiences of it were unpleasant and painful, and so set her against it. The trouble is very often caused by the fact that the husband does not know how to make the approaches to it, so that he attempts or demands sexual intercourse before she is ready to take her part in it. And when she is not ready for it, she will resent and dislike it.

In this way many marriages go wrong at the beginning, and sometimes never recover from this false start. They *may recover*, and sometimes do, even after years. But with proper understanding and patience such mistakes need never be made.

It is not really the fault of young husbands that many of them make mistakes at first. They have not been told how to make the first approaches to sexual intercourse, or what to seek and what to avoid. Their wives, too, are ignorant and sometimes frightened and cannot help. So they bungle the whole business: and

the husband feels disappointed and impatient and the wife unhappy or even angry.

In this booklet we offer advice about how to manage these matters so that husband and wife shall both be satisfied. It is written in the hope that it may help to increase the number of happy marriages.

Preparing the Wife for Intercourse

The first point to remember is that sexual intercourse must not be attempted *till the wife is ready for it* ; and it is the husband's business to make her ready. She wants first of all to feel and know that she is loved, and only then is her body ready to respond in sex intimacy.

Some women are very quickly awakened, and may be found eager to express their love in sexual intercourse on the very first night of marriage, and with almost no preparation. But this is rare ; and most women, even though truly in love, must be treated with patience. They have a general affection for their husbands, but it does not at first take the form of wanting sexual intimacy. It may take days or even weeks, for them to reach that point.

How, then, must the husband invite his wife to the act of intercourse ?

First, he must make love to her in words. Though she knows her man loves her, she wants to hear him say so again and again. She loves to hear him say why he

loves her and what things in her attract him so much. But even if he does not find it easy to say things, he will have her in his arms and be kissing her. She will probably like a good tight hug, but some men who are big and strong almost smother a woman when they hug her. Let him be gentle as well as strong. That hug will very likely make the husband want to go straight on to sexual intimacy at once. He will feel excited and passionate.

But he must restrain himself, and wait awhile. Patience and self-control at this point will be rewarded abundantly later on. Let him be gentle and begin to caress his wife's body. It will be found that there are tender and sensitive spots which, when gently approached and touched, will arouse her response in a special way. In this way, without being hurried, she will accept and welcome the caressing of her body ; she will possibly return her man's kisses with growing eagerness and give him a good hug. This will mean she is becoming ready for sexual intercourse. But not *necessarily* on the first night. Many wives are tired on that first night. They have been very busy and thinking of many things, so that they cannot give themselves wholeheartedly to physical love-making. And if their husbands are content with general caresses and then let their wives go off to sleep, they will earn much gratitude for having been so considerate. (It is possible, of course, that on the first night the wife may be having a "period"—sometimes the excitement of the

wedding may bring this on. And then the husband should wait till it is over).

Possibly on the first night, more likely on the second or third, the time will come for the first act of intercourse. The husband may say to himself, "How can I know when my wife is ready for it?" Generally the wife will make it plain by the warmth of her caresses and the yielding of her body; and the parts between the legs (the genital region) will become soft and warm and moist to the touch. This is an essential condition for easy and happy intercourse. For if these parts are unrelaxed and dry at the moment of intercourse, she will be hurt and may therefore dislike the whole business and be unwilling to try again. If these parts are slow to relax or respond, it may help if the husband gently touches the place of entrance with his fingers, as sometimes, though not always, this gives the wife a specially pleasant feeling and helps to prepare her. But it must be remembered that from natural modesty the wife may shrink from too intimate handling of her body in the approach to intercourse. It may be less disturbing to her, at least at first, to proceed straight from the loving embraces to the act of intercourse. She may need time to welcome the caressing of her body; and the touching of her sexual parts before intercourse may be at first, and may even continue to be, unpleasing to her. In any case, the husband will always ask her whether she is ready, and will only proceed when she says yes. Very soon he will find out how to make the approaches to inter-

course happy for both, by studying her feelings and by finding what helps and pleases her.

Even when the wife is ready, quite ready, she may at the first few times have some pain; but she will endure it gladly when it is part of a loving act for which she is prepared. Pain experienced when she is not ready is a very different thing. It may be said here that there need be nothing more than a momentary pain, unless there is some physical maladjustment. Every girl before marriage should go to a qualified doctor *to make certain that there is no difficulty of this sort. Sometimes to ease the act of intercourse a lubricant may be helpful. It should not be a grease like vaseline, but a lubricant such as K.Y. Jelly, which can be got from any chemist. Attention to these details will often make the difference between success and failure.

Achieving Mutual Fulfilment

Now the difficulty which arises at this point is that, by all this caressing and all this waiting, the husband may become so aroused that he will have his emission of fluid before his wife is ready or before he is able to make union with her. Then he may be unable for a

*The Marriage Guidance Council recommends both the man and the woman to have a medical examination before marriage. If there is no family doctor who can do this the Council may be able to give the name of a suitable medical man or woman in the district. A later booklet in this series deals with this important subject.

time to manage another erection. Meanwhile, his wife will have become stirred and excited, but will remain unsatisfied and restless.

If this difficulty arises it can only be got over by patience. After a few attempts the husband will be able to hold himself back until his wife is ready. Also, she will be able to respond more quickly as she gains experience. So a man may expect before long to be able to make the union easily, and to wait for his emission of fluid till after he has done so. In time he will be able to stay in union for a while before his emission comes ; and that will make it more enjoyable for his wife.

If a husband finds that he tends to have his emission too quickly, he should try *not to worry about it*. That is the worst possible thing to do, and will only increase the difficulty. Many men have this trouble in the early days of marriage, and after being separated from their wives. Often a husband who loses his erection in this way finds that he is more successful if he waits quietly for an hour or two and then tries again. If the trouble goes on for a long time and refuses to clear up he should get advice from a good medical psychologist.*

Now we come to a matter which is very important. A wife is so made that in the act of sexual union she

*The Marriage Guidance Council has prepared a leaflet on "Sex Difficulties in the Husband" to help men in these matters. The cost is 6d., plus 2½d. postage.

has, or should have, what is called an "orgasm." This is difficult to describe. It is for her the physical climax of the act, and is like the sensation the husband gets when he has his emission of fluid. A stirring and twitching of her muscles takes place, and she feels with it a thrill of breathless excitement. After this has happened, she feels satisfied and relaxed. Her whole body feels comfortable and she is inclined to fall peacefully asleep.

Many wives (generally because their husbands have not known how to help them to it) have never had this "orgasm." They may quite well have children without having had it. But they miss something of great value. Only when they reach this climax do they fully enjoy sexual union. If they do not have it, they may come to think of sexual intercourse merely as "something men want"; while they themselves take less and less interest in it, and often regard it simply as a nuisance. It is very sad when this happens, because then both husband and wife miss a great happiness. The husband knows he is not having what he really longs for. Sexual intercourse when the wife is indifferent and uninterested is not very satisfying to either.

How, then, can the husband help his wife to her proper climax? He does so best by approaching the act of union step by step with her, and by continuing the actual union and delaying his emission till her orgasm begins. But if the husband has his emission before his wife gets her orgasm, he must not just turn

over and go to sleep. At least, he should understand and sympathise with her. Or, if she desires it, he may still help her to reach it by continuing in close contact with her, by quiet movement, or by a gentle but firm touching and stimulating her sexual parts until the orgasm comes. She will not mind too much if it is only occasionally that the orgasm does not come, and if the husband shows that he understands. There are times when it is more difficult for a woman to get the climax—for example, when she is tired, or perhaps at one time of the month rather than another. On the other hand, a wife may occasionally need to have the orgasm more than once before she is fully satisfied.*

All that has been said makes it plain that husband and wife must understand and help each other in this whole matter. They must not expect complete success at first. They will each have to find out the other's needs, and then learn how to satisfy them. For example, there are several different positions in which intercourse may take place quite naturally (these are described in some of the books recommended at the end of this booklet), and each couple will find by experience which way suits them best. It may take weeks, or even months, before they learn to have sexual intercourse which is care-free, happy and completely

*A leaflet called "Sex Difficulties in the Wife" has been prepared by the Marriage Guidance Council to give further help in these matters. Cost 6d. plus 2½d. postage.

satisfactory to both. But when they have learnt that, both will benefit greatly. They will love each other more than ever. The wife will not be irritable, and will not want to avoid her husband ; and the sad difficulties and troubles which now often arise will be avoided.

That is why it is so very important to learn how to manage this part of married life.

Some Practical Points

And now let us face a few very practical points. Husbands and wives must try to be as physically attractive as possible to one another. And often they are very careless. They should keep their bodies clean by taking regular baths. They should avoid dirty teeth and bad breath. If a man is not well-shaved, his face will feel bristly. Many men have rough jobs so that their hands are hard, and they must use them gently. And, of ccuise, if a man "stinks of beer and tobacco," a sensitive woman will be repelled by it. It is very much worth while to take trouble about these things.

A further practical question will have to be faced, namely, "How often should sexual intercourse take place?"

No definite answer can be given to that question except that here, as in everything else, moderation and due restraint are right. Some men would like it every day and some not more than once a month. Some women would like it very often, and others only now and then. It is probably true that when they get it in the right way, women want it quite as much as men.

There are marriages in trouble because the men do not take care to satisfy their wives in this respect.

If husbands and wives come together too often they may weary of one another and spoil this side of marriage. It will lose its joy and become a mere physical habit. On the average, about once a week suits many couples best. Twice or three times a week is possible. Anything more than that is too much.

There are times when a man must restrain himself for love's sake—when his wife has her monthly periods ; when she has some mental worry ; when she is very tired ; when she is not well ; in the last stages of pregnancy*. And, of course, there are times when a man is too tired or too worried for love-making ; then his wife must be patient with him.

On the other hand, if husbands or wives are starved in this matter they become restless or depressed. Each couple should find out for themselves the right way of life for them. They must avoid extremes and must agree together, talking it over frankly and naturally, and respecting one another's feelings.

Now another practical point. It is a mistake for sexual intercourse to be hurried over. There should be plenty of time to approach it happily and gradually. The whole process should last for some time : husbands should not withdraw as soon as they have had their emission, but should remain in close and loving contact with their wives. So the physical union is not merely

* Intercourse can take place, with due care, up to the last three months of pregnancy. It ought not to be resumed till six weeks after normal childbirth.

physical, but is a part of the mutual affection and devotion of husband and wife. The union expresses and deepens that mutual affection. For all these reasons it should take place when there is full leisure, warm surroundings, and, of course, uninterrupted privacy. Husbands and wives should get rid of the feeling that there is anything indecent, immodest, or wrong about their sex relationship. They have been given bodies suitable for love-making. And it is right and good that in marriage they should be "one flesh"—locked closely and happily in each other's arms.

Birth Control

Many young wives are unwilling to become pregnant at the very beginning of their married lives. They perhaps think that they want a space of time in which to settle down to their new way of life; or they may shrink from the idea of child-bearing. If fear of unwanted pregnancy is in the wife's mind, she will shrink from sexual connection. Then, even if the husband follows all the advice we have given, he will fail to bring about happy and successful intercourse.

Couples ought to look forward to having a baby soon after the beginning of marriage. If they can settle in a home of their own, and the man has a steady job, they should wish to have a child as soon as possible, and it should not be postponed merely for selfish reasons. But sometimes circumstances do make it necessary to avoid having a child at once. Later on in marriage,

too, this question will have to be faced by most couples. If they do nothing to prevent conception and go on living in sexual intimacy, the wife may have a baby every eighteen months or possibly oftener. That would mean putting on her a strain which might injure her health. It is too much for the strength of the ordinary woman, and it may not be good for the children either. It is a good thing that couples should aim at having three or four children, or even more ; but there should in most cases be at least two years between the births.

It is clear that this question has a very important connection with the happiness of marriage. Wives may try to avoid sexual intercourse with their husbands because they feel at times that they just *cannot* face the chance of becoming pregnant again. It is not that they do not love their husbands. It is not that they do not enjoy sexual intimacy. It is just that they shrink from having another baby. Yet their husbands may be anxious to have intercourse, and if they are refused they resent it. And so serious trouble often arises.

This matter must be faced by the two together. They must decide for themselves whether it is right for them to avoid having a baby for the time being. If they do so decide with a good conscience, they must agree on a plan to prevent the wife conceiving.

Some manage this by keeping apart. They just don't have sexual intercourse at all unless a child is

desired. But few couples, amid the ordinary intimacies of married life, can do this for any length of time without severe nervous strain.

Again, there are couples who use the so-called "safe period." By having intercourse only on the few days just before the monthly flow begins, the wife is less likely to conceive. This is the only way (apart from abstaining from intercourse altogether) in which Roman Catholics are allowed to avoid pregnancy. It works quite well with some couples. But it must be understood that it doesn't make *sure* that the woman won't conceive; it is only *less likely* on these days. Also, for some women this is just the very time when they have very little desire for intercourse. So it has its disadvantages.

Some husbands adopt the practice known as "withdrawal." The man withdraws quickly so that his emission does not happen inside his wife's body. Some couples call it "being careful." This is *a very bad plan*. It is not reliable. It is difficult for the husband to control his emission of fluid. He does not always feel when it starts. Even if he does, some may have escaped beforehand, and may be quite enough to make the wife pregnant. Besides, this way of having intercourse cannot really satisfy the man; and it usually means that the woman misses the climax. The true joy of their union is spoiled because, just at the point where they should "let go," and come closest to one another, they have to draw apart. The wife is often

worried lest her husband should be careless and leave it too late. Nothing spoils the supreme bliss of sexual union more than fear or anxiety, and in this way the happiness of many marriages has been undermined.

Another method is for the husband to wear a rubber sheath or "French letter" (covering his organ like the finger of a glove). This prevents the man's emission from entering his wife's body. Under some circumstances this method may work successfully. It is easy to use, and is fairly reliable if the rubber sheath is a good one and is washed carefully after use; or a fresh one may be used each time. A suitable lubricant will also increase the comfort and efficiency. But few couples find it a good plan for continued use. It does not fully satisfy the husband, and often the wife also feels something is missing. There is a danger, also, that the sheath may have tiny holes in it, or may get torn in use. To meet this risk, it may be smeared, inside and out, with a contraceptive paste like Volpar.

In some cases the man takes no precaution, but the woman uses a chemical contraceptive tablet, which dissolves and forms a protective foam. Doctors who have wide experience do not recommend this method by itself. It has proved very unreliable in practice. A good chemical contraceptive used by the woman may, however, be a valuable *extra* safeguard when the man is wearing a sheath.

A much better method is for the wife to be fitted by a doctor with a "diaphragm cap." *No woman should*

*use one of these caps unless it has been fitted by a properly qualified doctor,** who will fit her with just the right size and type and show her how to place it in position and remove it after use. If it is properly fitted, neither the husband nor the wife should be conscious of its presence during intercourse. It should *always* be used with a special contraceptive paste. The doctor will explain about this.

We must repeat that each couple must decide this question of birth control for themselves. If their own conscience or religious belief forbids them to use certain methods, they should not do so. They would only be plunging themselves into moral conflict which would do them harm. But there are many people who have no objection to contraceptives and may use bad methods through ignorance. We have therefore explained all the most usual methods, so that couples may make their own decision with the facts before them.

We would urge couples who decide to use contraceptives to get proper advice before they do so. Untold harm is done through placing confidence in products sold or advertised to the public by irresponsible people whose only motive is commercial gain. The dangers of using unreliable or unhygienic methods can be avoided by consulting a suitably qualified doctor. If in doubt, write to the Family Planning Association or the Marriage Guidance Council.

* If the wife does not know of a suitable doctor or clinic, she should write to The Family Planning Association, 69, Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1.

Conclusion

Mutually satisfying sexual intercourse, though very important, is not by itself enough to make a good marriage which will go on being happy through many years. For that there must be a genuine comradeship between the two. Each must try to make the other happy. Each must learn to express love in many ways. And, of course, the real trouble is selfishness. The man is apt to want everything to go his way. He often does not stop to ask himself whether his wife is happy. He does not consider her feelings. Or it may be the wife who is selfish and inconsiderate. Then the two may drift apart and cease to love each other. The physical side of their relationship will not be enough to hold them together if the spiritual side is neglected.

Love needs to be renewed again and again. Husbands and wives have to watch themselves lest they grow selfish and unkind, or careless about the little details which matter so much to the other partner. In fact, real success in marriage depends upon character. If we aim at becoming sympathetic and kind and humble and helpful, things will go well. Marriage can bring people wonderful happiness if they will learn patiently how to make a success of it.

BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

These books are recommended by the Marriage Guidance Council, and can be ordered from the office at 78, Duke Street, London, W.1. If a book is temporarily out of print when ordered, our practice is to hold the remittance and post the book as soon as supplies come in from the publishers.

Books.

Michael Fielding. *Parenthood : Design or Accident?*
Williams & Norgate. 3/6. Postage 4d.

A practical handbook on birth control for the ordinary reader, written by a medical man. The ethics of contraception are discussed, and practical advice given to those who need it.

A. H. Gray. *Men, Women, and God* : Student Christian Movement Press. 4/6. Postage 4d.

A discussion of sex questions from the Christian point of view. This book has enjoyed an immense and well-deserved popularity. It is a very useful guide to right conduct in sexual matters for young people.

A. H. Gray. *Successful Marriage*. Rich & Cowan. 5/-.
Postage 4d.

A wise and understanding book on the art of achieving happiness in marriage. Suitable alike for married people and those about to be married.

E. F. Griffith. *Modern Marriage and Birth Control*.
Methuen. 7/6. Postage 4d.

A helpful non-technical discussion of married life by a medical expert. It deals fully with such questions as sex technique, contraception and sterility.

D. R. Mace. *Does Sex Morality Matter?* Rich & Cowan. 5/-. Postage 4d.

A discussion of the conflicting standards of sexual behaviour in the modern world, and an attempt to establish sound principles as a guide to conduct. Deals with such questions as free love, trial marriage, venereal disease, birth control and divorce.

Helena Wright. *The Sex Factor in Marriage.* Williams & Norgate. 4/-. Postage 4d.

This clear, simple and very practical handbook has had an immense circulation. It is outstanding among books on sex technique written for those about to be married and those already married.

Booklets

The Threshold of Marriage. Church of England Moral Welfare Council. 6d. Postage 2½d.

This booklet was produced to meet the need of the clergy for a suitable pamphlet to hand to those about to be married. It is admirably suited to this purpose.

Marriage and Parenthood. Marriage and Parenthood Committee of the Friends' Book Centre. 6d. Postage 2½d.

Officially issued by the Society of Friends for engaged and married people. Discusses married life, including the question of birth control, in a wise and understanding manner. Includes an excellent guide to further literature on the subject.

From Friendship to Marriage. A. Herbert Gray. 4d. Postage 2½d.

Wise guidance to men and women on the art of right relationships with the opposite sex.

Marriage and Home-making. Enid Smith. Alliance of Honour. 6d. Postage 2½d.

A clear, practical and remarkably comprehensive little booklet of instruction to those thinking about marriage.

In addition to the above, further "Marriage Guidance Booklets" are in preparation and will be ready in due course. These are as follows :

- No. 2. Sex Difficulties in the Husband.
- No. 3. Sex Difficulties in the Wife.
- No. 4. Help for Childless Couples.
- No. 5. Preparation for Marriage.
- No. 6. Marriage and Divorce in English Law.
- No. 7. The Change of Life in Women.

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